



COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA JOINT LEADERSHIP COUNCIL OF VETERANS SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS

Position Paper 2014-05 Implementing the Virginia Homeless Veterans Program

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*Air Force Association
American Ex-Prisoners
of War
American Legion
AMVETS
Association of the United
States Army
Disabled American
Veterans
Fleet Reserve Association
Korean War Veterans
Association
Legion of Valor of the
U.S., Inc.
Marine Corps League
Military Order of the
Purple Heart
Military Officers Association
of America
Military Order of the
World Wars
National Association for
Uniformed Services
Navy Seabee Veterans of
America
Non-Commissioned
Officers Association
Paralyzed Veterans of
America
Reserve Officers Association
Roanoke Valley Veterans
Council
Veterans of Foreign Wars
Vietnam Veterans of America
Virginia Army/Air National
Guard Enlisted
Association
Virginia National Guard
Association
Women Marines Association*

Adopted
July 17, 2013

Updated
January 5, 2014

Notes:
1. JLARC Study #402 *Reducing
Veteran Homelessness in
Virginia* issued in September
2010
2. JLARC cost estimates are
found in Table 16 (page 93) in
items 3), 4), and 12).

1. **OBJECTIVE:** To plan, implement, and sustain an effective program to eliminate homelessness within our Virginia veterans population.
2. **BACKGROUND:**
 - a. Homelessness within the Virginia veterans population has been a long-term issue predating the Vietnam War.
 - b. The Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission (JLARC) completed a significant study¹ in 2010 documenting a baseline size and nature of issue. The study found that significant long-term funding and a dedicated program would be required to solve the problem. Studies by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), veterans groups, and localities support the urgent need to implement the JLARC recommendations.
 - c. Those studies also establish that there have been significant increases in the number and percentage of women veterans and the children of veterans among the homeless.
 - d. Governor McDonnell specifically addressed homeless veterans in two major policy statements: Executive Order 29 and the establishment of a Homeless Working Group.
 - e. The General Assembly approved two positions in the Department of Veterans Services (DVS) to plan and coordinate an intensive program to dramatically reduce homelessness among veterans and their families. A Homeless Veterans Program (HVP) Director has been hired and the development of policies and procedures begun.
3. **DISCUSSION:**
 - a. Elimination of homelessness among Virginia's veterans requires a long-term effort.
 - b. During the first year (FY15) an effective HVP will require an operating budget of about \$450,000². The HVP should continue development of a targeted program incorporating the resources of the VA and the Virginia Wounded Warrior Program (VWWP), which have established unique resources for assisting veterans.
 - c. The HVP should coordinate with community resources, identify grants which are available to reduce homelessness, identify locales to establish pilot programs, and field test pilot outreach efforts (one- and multi-day stand-downs) in at least two urban areas and four multi-county rural areas. Also, the HVP should form partnerships with emergency shelters and transitional housing in proximity to VA Medical Centers.
 - d. The second year of the HVP (FY16) should be based upon lessons learned with a goal to implement specific programs that effectively serve urban, suburban, and rural areas. These programs, in addition to immediately reducing veteran homelessness, should continue to explore, test, and refine methods to enhance services throughout the Commonwealth. A budget of about \$970,000² may be required.
 - e. The goal for the out-years should be to provide an intensive and extensive delivery of services to eliminate homelessness among Virginia's veteran population. Future budget requests should be based upon the refined procedures developed to increase private/local government partnerships, to provide all levels of housing through grants and local organizations, work with Virginia's Community Colleges to provide skilled job training, and providing counseling and health care using the VA, Virginia's Community Service Boards, and local Free Health Clinics.
4. **RECOMMENDATION:** That the Governor and the General Assembly support DVS services for homeless veterans by approving a budget amendment for \$450,000 (GF) in FY15 and \$970,000 (GF) in FY16².